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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: NINEWA: SMALL-SCALE RETURNS TO MOSUL OF CHRISTIAN
IDPS

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Alex Laskaris, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The commander of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in Ninewa, LTG Riyadh, told us October 26 that 130 displaced Christians have returned to the city. Ninewa governor Kashmoula said all Christian civil servants who work in Provincial Hall are back on the job. One of his deputies told us that many Christian university students have returned to class, although many are commuting into the city. Kashmoula was dismissive of Christian political leadership, saying that politicians are taking advantage of the IDP flight in order to advance personal political agendas. A more robust ISF presence on the streets seems to have encouraged some Christians to return to the city, as we confirmed in meetings with several of the returnees. End Summary.

¶2. (C) PRT leader discussed the state of Christian internally displaced persons (IDPs) with Deputy Governor for Administrative Affairs Yussuf Lalo (protect) and, separately, with Ninewa Governor Duraid Kashmoula on October 26. Lalo said that many of the 2,000 Christian students at Mosul University have returned to class, although most are commuting in from outlying areas. He said that one of the owners of a destroyed home in Mosul approached him the previous day asking for some \$150,000 to rebuild her home in the Al-Suker neighborhood, and he asked if the U.S. could intercede on her behalf with the GOI.

¶3. (C) Kashmoula said that the pre-September 28 Christian population of Mosul was 24,000; he said that there are 120,000 Christians of all denominations in Ninewa Province. In a separate conversation, NOC Commander LTG Riyadh told CF that some 130 Christians have returned to Mosul. Kashmoula too said there have been some small-scale returns, and noted that all of the Christians who work in Provincial Hall are back on the job. (Note: He had guaranteed their salaries even if they did not return.) Kashmoula said that the only people who reliably speak for the Christians are their clergymen. He was dismissive of the Christian political establishment, which he said is taking advantage of the IDP flight in order to advance personal political agendas.

¶4. (C) PRT-Ninewa and a U.S. Army Civil Affairs team visited Mosul's Christian neighborhood of Al-Sukar October 24 and spoke with several returnees. While a small sample, this anecdotal information coincides with what we are hearing from political contacts. On the street where three Christian houses were destroyed, the patriarch of a prominent Christian family told us his family of nine returned from the village of Bashika (about 20 miles northeast of Mosul) four to five days earlier, but said that the vast majority of families have chosen to remain outside of Mosul for the time being. He has little faith in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) or the provincial governor, but his neighbors told us they have seen increased ISF patrols in the neighborhood. On the other hand, another Christian resident told us he only came back to check his property and would never live in Mosul again.

¶5. (C) On October 25, MND-N Deputy Commander BG Thomas had a similar conversation with a Christian family in the Mahiya neighborhood, which fled when other Mosul Christians departed

but returned five days later. The local ISF commander in Mahiya has augmented forces on the street and intends to show that his unit will protect all residents. In the Al-Sukar neighborhood, Major Abed of the recently deployed Iraqi Army First Battalion, Ninth Brigade, told us that he has ordered two-person patrols throughout the neighborhood. One of his lieutenants estimated that about half of Al-Sukar's Christian residents had left, but he claimed that his unit has arrested many suspected insurgents and the area is now secure.

¶6. (C) Comment: Mosul Christians fled en masse in response to murders, direct intimidation, or) in the majority of cases) fear induced by the flight of others in the community. With many families in safe-havens nearby, we expect that decisions on returns will be made on a household-by-household basis. An ISF presence that is visible, constant and accessible to the Moslawi public will, over time, give Christian and other IDPs the confidence to make the choice to return. Getting the ISF to adopt a community policing model, a strategy that Coalition Forces are pursuing, is our best security response to this flight and insecurity in general. End comment.

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